

F
74
C8R4



THE STORY
OF A
CONCORD FARM
AND ITS OWNERS.

GRINDALL REYNOLDS,

^W
FEBRUARY 1, 1883.



A LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE THE CONCORD LYCEUM.

F174
C877+

By transfer

D. of Agr.

0 27 '06



THE STORY

OF A

CONCORD FARM AND ITS OWNERS.

IN a little sketch of Concord, which I wrote for Drake's History of Middlesex County, I alluded to a beautifully rounded little eminence filling the triangle made by the junction of the Sudbury and Assabet Rivers. One point of this triangle ends in a miniature promontory, known to children of our generation as Egg Rock. The hill itself was called by the planters of the town plain North Hill. Since their day it has been variously termed Lee's Hill, Barrett's Hill and Hurd's Hill, while in recent times a not very successful effort has been made to restore the Indian name, Nawshawtuck.

This little hill and the woodlands, meadows and arable land attached to it, make a tract of about four hundred acres, bounded chiefly by the two branches of the Concord River. It constitutes one of the few farms in Concord which very nearly retain their original character. Pieces of land have been added to it; pieces of land have been subtracted from it; but, in the bulk of it, the farm is what it was, when in the second division of the lands, two hundred and twenty-eight years ago, it fell to the lot of Maj. Simon Willard. I venture to ask attention to the story of this farm and

its owners. The subject must have some attractions for Concord men and women. The annals, themselves, show in what a wonderful manner, in the lapse of time, width and variety of genuine human interest get attached to one little parcel of ground.

We begin with the first owners, the Indians. A powerful tribe once occupied the whole region now known as Middlesex and Essex Counties, and could boast three thousand warriors. A mysterious plague in 1612 swept off nine-tenths of these people. "They died in heaps," says the old chronicler. "The bones and skulls in their several places of habitation made such a spectacle that it seemed a new-found Golgotha." Then their chief, Nanepashemit, whom the historian styles "the renowned," moved from Lynn to Medford, probably for greater safety from hereditary foes. There he built a curious fort of poles thirty feet long, driven into the ground in a great circle. But there his enemies found him and slew him; and there he was buried. His wife, Squaw Sachem, succeeded to his authority, and first perhaps in Massachusetts practically asserted and maintained woman's rights. With a sagacity worthy of a Christian potentate she confirmed her power by a second marriage with Webbacowet, whom the old Puritan, with no surplus of politeness, termed "the pow-wow, witch, priest, sorcerer and chirurgeon of the tribe." What farther we know about this woman is told by the Massachusetts Colonial Records, where it appears that for a mere pittance she sold land to the settlers of Concord, Cambridge and Charlestown, and gave to one Jotham Gibbons the tract of land near the Mystic ponds, which she had reserved for her own use, to acknowledge (as she expressed it in her

deed) "the many kindnesses she had received from his father, and for the tender love and respect which she bore to the son, and desired that these be recorded in perpetual remembrance of this thing." Across the centuries no more touching eulogium has come to us than this simple testimony of the rude forest queen to the Christian charity and justice of Captain Edward Gibbons, of Boston, and of plain Jotham Gibbons, his son. In 1641 appears also a vote by which Cambridge is enjoined to give Squaw Sachem one coat every winter; and the next year another vote by which she was to receive from the same source, as a sort of primitive back pay, four coats and thirty-five bushels of corn. In 1644 she and four other chiefs put themselves, their subjects and property under the jurisdiction of the State. On this occasion sundry grave questions and simple answers are duly entered on the public records. For entire honesty of statement we commend to your attention the reply made to requirement No. 3, which ran thus: "Not to do any unnecessary worke on the Sabath day." To which the straightforward savages said, "It is easy to them. They have not much to do any day. And they can well take their ease that day." She died in 1662, old and blind.

Of this broken tribe a feeble remnant under a sub-chief, Tahattawan, lived in Concord. Probably in all they did not number a hundred. For Higginson tells us, that "after the plague few Sagamores had three hundred subjects, some but fifteen, some only two." Their home was on the farther side of the stream from Egg Rock to Clamshell bluffs. Behind was land for their rude husbandry. Before the river, which, as Mr. Hale has said of some other poor folks, was all the

pork and beef barrel they had. On the hill possibly a little fort or stockade. No doubt they were glad to exchange land, which they could not occupy, for knives, hoes and cloth, of which they were in sore need. The rest of their story is quickly told. They became Christians; pathetically asking "not to be moved far from the English, lest they should forget to pray." In their new home at Littleton they lived peaceably and honestly forty years. Then King Philip's war broke out. No chapter in our town history so shameful as that which tells of the treatment of this helpless people. By order of the General Court they were removed back to Concord. Only one man, John Hoar, rose above the prejudice and fear of the hour. (I presume that his place was on Lexington street, where Mr. Alcott's house stands.) He permitted the poor exiles to put their wigwams on his grounds, took charge of them, employed them. There were but fifty-eight of them, only twelve were men, and these unarmed. "They were living," as Maj. Gookin reports, "very soberly, and quietly, and industriously." But neither their weakness nor their good conduct could save them from persecution.

The exigencies of the time had brought to the surface one Capt. Moseley, a soldier of desperate courage, and an old West Indian buccanier. The superstitious red men viewed him with a peculiar terror; for they said that he was a man with two heads. The fact was, he wore, what in New England in those days was not common, a wig. This wig, when he came into an engagement, he was wont to hang on a bush, and to keep, as the Indians affirmed, another head upon his shoulders, and to fight just as well as if he had the

ordinary stock. Any one familiar with Cooper's novels will readily recall an incident in one of his Leatherstocking tales, which was probably suggested by this old tradition. This Capt. Moseley had under him a company in which there were no less than twelve pirates, pardoned to fight Indians. He had signalized his promotion by an act of cruel injustice to the Christian Indians of Marlboro'. To him certain of the townspeople sent secretly. He came. It was mid-winter. With the active sympathy of many of the citizens, it is to be feared, with the passive consent of most is certain, he snatched these poor people from the hands of Mr. Hoar, scattering their little properties, and hurried them to the bleak shores of Deer Island, there to spend the bitter winter and the inclement spring with no shelter but their tents, and no food but a scanty supply of corn, and the clams they dug from the sea shore. It seems incredible, that within two months of this outrage, one of these very Indians, Thomas Dublit, volunteered to go on a dangerous mission to the hostile tribes to endeavor to secure the release of Mrs. Rowlandson. For this end he and another Indian made three expeditions. On the fourth he was accompanied by Mr. John Hoar, who succeeded, apparently with no little peril, in redeeming her, bringing her first to Concord and then to Boston. How many of these Nashobah Indians ever came back from their cruel exile, neither history nor tradition tell; but in 1734 only one was left. Thus the story ends of the first owners of our beautiful hill, girded by the quiet rivers. Their ample fields we occupy, and at their hands our fathers received nothing but gifts and friendly treatment.

The first white owner of the farm was Major Simon Willard. Not unlikely three-quarters of Concord-born people now living do not know who Simon Willard was. Then it is time they did know. For infant Concord owed more to him perhaps than to any other single person. He it was who selected the spot on which the town stands, and by his influence with the natives promoted its peaceable possession. He was one of the little band who made that painful march through thickets and watery swamps and unknown woods, which the old Puritan annalist so graphically describes. And he it was that in the dark and difficult days of the first settlement filled every post and performed every duty. Probably in all those early years he was its chief selectman. Certainly for eighteen years he was its clerk, and for fifteen years its deputy at the General Court. From the beginning he was the military commander; and with two others made the legal tribunal before which all cases between man and man of moderate importance were tried. Last but not least, to him was entrusted the delicate office of selling strong water. For, however strange it may look to us, rum selling was then committed to men in high standing and was itself almost a certificate of good character.

Nor was his work and usefulness confined within this single town. Possibly he was the most influential man in the county. All through his later years he held the office of Assistant. Now, in Massachusetts, in the 17th century, an Assistant was a person with high and varied duties. In the General Court he was a senator. To the Governor he was a councillor. In the administration of law a member of the only Supreme Judicial

Court of the period. To all these honors and labors Simon Willard was called for twenty-two successive years, and just as he died, received the largest vote given for any one for his twenty-third term. Add now that in 1641 to him and two others was given the whole charge of trade with the Indians; that in 1655 he was promoted to the command of all the military force of Middlesex County; that in almost innumerable cases he was appointed to settle bounds between individuals and towns, and in one case, between Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and adjust differences with Indians, whom the fathers, like their children, were not indisposed to oppress,—and you see that he was a notable man and trusted, not simply here, but in all the region about.

The facts of his life are simple. He was born in 1605, at Horsemonden, Kent, where a descendant found the ancient church in which he was christened, and a magnificent oak, more than three hundred years old, under whose shade he must have played. When he was four years old his mother died, when eleven, his father, leaving his son a good patrimony. At twenty-nine years he was married, in comfortable circumstances, with a promising business. Then like many another, for conscience sake, he left all. At Cambridge, by the Charles River, he bought a farm, built a house and began to trade with the natives. A year passed, when he sold his property, turned his back on the comparatively settled life of Cambridge, and plunged into the wilderness to help plant a new town, there to live twenty-four years. His biographer intimates that the warm attachment which had grown up between him and Rev. Peter Bulkeley led to this

change of plan. July, 1658, the selectmen of Lancaster, feeling the need of a ruling mind, thought "meet to order a letter of invitation to be sent to Major Simon Willard to come and inhabit among us." A similar invitation a previous year had been declined. But eight months before this last call Mr. Bulkeley had closed his career. Perhaps that weakened the tie which held him. At any rate he accepted the invitation, and sold his farm. For twelve years he was the controlling mind in Lancaster. Then he moved to Groton, where his son was minister. There King Philip's war found him. At seventy, with all the fire and vigor of youth, he took command of the Middlesex soldiers, trying, with a scanty force, alas! to protect the wide, helpless frontier. When Captain Thomas Wheeler and Lieutenant Simon Davis with a little band from Concord and the vicinity were surprised at Brookfield and besieged, and in the last extremity, it was their old neighbor who rode up with his troopers and friendly Indians and rescued them. March 14, 1676, while he was absent on service, his own house at Groton and sixty-five others were burned. One month later he lay dead in his new home at Charlestown, worn out, I doubt not, by the burden and grief of that dreadful war, too heavy for shoulders that had already laid on them the weight of seventy-one years. The first European, who occupied the farm on the hill, was a noble specimen of a noble race. Weighty in judgment, versatile, trusty, of kindly temper, of indomitable industry, he filled well almost every conceivable post.

His successor was a very different pattern of a man, — much more entertaining, I suspect, much less use-

ful. The first glimpse we have of him is in the journal of one John Dunton, an Englishman, who made a trip through New England in the latter half of the seventeenth century, visiting Lynn on his way to Salem. In that journal he records: "About 2 of the Clock I reached Capt. Marshall's house, which is half way between Boston and Salem. I staid to refresh nature with a pint of sack and a good fowl. Capt. Marshall was a hearty old gentleman, formerly one of Oliver's soldiers, upon which he very much valued himself. He had all the history of the civil war at his finger's ends, and if we may believe him, Oliver did hardly anything that was considerable without his assistance; and if I'd have staid as long as he'd have talked, he'd spoiled my ramble to Salem." This Capt. Thomas Marshall came to Lynn in 1635. But when the civil war between the parliament and the king broke out, he returned to England, entered Cromwell's army, became a captain, and came back to New England covered with glory, a fact of which he was apparently quite sensible. A little before, Joseph Armitage built on the Saugus River one of the first taverns erected in the colony. By a curious freak the sign of this tavern, an anchor, was painted a bright blue, and the place was familiarly known as "The Blew Anchor." This "Blew Anchor" Capt. Marshall bought and kept many years. He must have been a person of some respectability, as the town of Lynn elected him no less than six times its deputy to the General Court, and in the Indian wars put its soldiers under his command. He must, however, have had some weak spots, if we are to judge from his experience as a magistrate, entitled to perform the marriage ceremony. The Massachusetts Records

state that on the 18th day of October, 1659, "Captain Marshall, of Lynn, was empowered to join in marriage such persons in Lynn as might desire his services, they being published according to lawe." But fifteen years after quite a different record appears. It says: "The Court being informed that Captain Thomas Marshall hath of late married some persons not legally published, on examination of the case, finds that he was abused by misinformation of some, and by his own overmuch credulity, and that he hath exceeded the commission by marrying people not living in the town, which might be occasioned by some mistake as to the extent of the commission, which the Court hath now more clearly explicated to prevent the like inconvenience; and judge meete to discharge the said Captain Marshall from officiating in that employment." What induced Captain Marshall to come to Concord, it is impossible to say. But come he did, and on the 29th of November, 1659, purchased Major Willard's farm for £210. But as nine days after the date of this deed he received authority "to sell strong water to travellers and other meet provisions," we exercise the Yankee privilege of guessing that he hoped to turn an honest penny by selling strong water at the place which Major Willard had established. Whether he was disappointed in his expectations, or was overcome by the temptation to make £30, we cannot guess. But for some reason in sixteen months he sold the place to Henry Woodis, or Woodhouse, for £240, and so passes out from Concord life. The last appearance of this veteran, of which we have any account, was as a witness in a trial about an old mill privilege in 1683. Six years after he died, aged 73. This third owner of the

farm was evidently a good deal of a character. The title, which clung to him, of the jolly landlord of the Blue Anchor, was significant. The traveller describes him as a hearty old gentleman, full of innocent vanity. The town historian calls him a fine old Englishman, who kept open doors to all comers. Even the Committee of the General Court softens a little and attributes his shortcomings to nothing worse than innocent credulity. One cannot but think that this easy-going and probably rosy-cheeked publican did not find the grave puritans of Concord congenial companions, and gladly got back to the Blue Anchor and to its cheery customers, who would listen to his long yarns about half-fabulous exploits.

Henry Woodis was the first owner of Lee's Hill, whom Shattuck records. Yet he is the very one of whom we know the least. He came to New England in 1650, so Savage affirms. He was in Concord in 1654, for in March of that year he voted in a minority of five against a plan to divide the town into quarters. Where he lived then, and what land he occupied is not clear. But of the 301 acres which he bought in 1661 of Thomas Marshall probably only 243 are in the present farm. Yet in 1699 he owned 350 acres, and no new purchase of land is recorded. May we not fairly infer that before 1661 he already had a hundred acres of his own, and in the same region. Five years after his purchase, his house burned, his only son, an infant of a few weeks, perished in the flames; and so it was fated that he should be at once the first and the last of his name in the town.*

* Tradition adds that he lost in the great London fire the preceding September two houses more. I do not think that the building he lost in Concord was the one erected by Simon Willard, but one he himself had built and occupied before he purchased the great farm of Thomas Marshall.

During his fifty years life here he filled some honorable positions. In King Philip's war he was first quartermaster, then lieutenant. For three years, from 1690 to 1692 he was representative. In 1684 he was one of a committee appointed to extinguish the Indian title to the new grant — now Acton. In 1699, an old man, he sold his farm to his son-in-law, Joseph Lee, reserving, however, one-fifth for his own use. Two years later he died. Mr. Woodis was evidently a person of respectable ability and character. But he left no such impress on our history as did his predecessors. Yet he was more essentially a Concord man. Few, if any, of their descendants remain in the town, while many, if not most of the old families, have a few drops of Henry Woodis' blood in their veins. Lee, Cheney, Estabrook, Dakin, Davis, Wood and Heywood are the names of some of the families into which his daughters and grand-daughters entered by marriage.

The tragical death of his only son left Mr. Woodis without an heir to his *name*; and his estate, partly by purchase and partly as the dowry of his daughter, fell into the hands of the Lees, by whom it was held one hundred and thirteen years. Of this family we have now to speak.

Joseph Lee, the first, was the son of a settler of Ipswich, whose true name, tradition says, was Leigh, and not Lee, as we have it. How, in those days, — when practically Ipswich was as far from Concord as Chicago is now, — Joseph Lee and Mary Woodis met at all, and especially met frequently enough to contemplate matrimony, is the problem. But they did, and in 1678 were married. The Ipswich records say that Mr. Lee did not move to Concord till 1696, and

then probably to relieve his father-in-law of the burden of his great farm. After Mr. Woodis' death he occupied the portion of the farm he had obtained, apparently making no effort to reclaim the fifth which had been bequeathed to the fourth daughter, Mrs. Dakin. Old age stole upon him, and in 1716 he gave his son Joseph 150 acres and his other children the rest of his estate and then died. That is all history or tradition records.

Joseph Lee, the second, was a physician. More ambitious than his father, he early set to work to unite the fragments of this grand farm. He purchased of Elinor Dakin the fifth, which his grandfather had alienated; then his brother's and sister's portions, finally adding, in 1730, two adjoining strips. So the 243 acres of Thomas Marshall, which Mr. Woodis had made 350, became in his grandson's charge, 375.

Joseph Lee, third of the name in Concord, physician, tory, had by the middle of the century again united the farm. By what heirship, by what purchases, is not clear. That he practiced his profession steadily is not probable. On the contrary the numerous accessions of land which he made outside his farm, and outside the town, indicate that he had large business transactions and achieved wealth. Ever after he was twenty-eight, until the commencement of the Revolutionary war, his time and interest must have been a good deal absorbed by church quarrels. He was one of those who seceded from the First Parish and formed what was called, in derision, the Black Horse Church, because its meetings were held in the hall of a tavern, near our present library, which had for a sign a black horse. This breach having been healed by the death of Rev.

Mr. Bliss, another quarrel, more personal and bitter than the last, broke out. Dr. Lee sought admission to the church and was repeatedly refused. Nine church members and others not of the church, under the title of aggrieved brethren, espoused his cause. What with interminable church meetings and innumerable church committees and councils, mutual or otherwise, they keep the church and themselves in a turmoil seven years. The cause of this division was not, as we might suppose, doctrinal. A somewhat tattered document shows that the cause was practical and personal. This asserts that Dr. Lee had oppressed widows and orphans by undue delays in settling accounts and by exorbitant charges; that he gave way to his passions, vilely reflecting on his pastor; that he threatened and bull-raged a committee who had done nothing but give him sound advice. All of which, as an *ex parte* statement, may be taken with a grain of salt. In the revolution, the doctor, having much to lose, shrank from civil war, upheld the existing powers, in short, was a tory. This was natural, and perhaps might have been excused. But that he stole down to Cambridge and betrayed secrets to the enemy, could not be overlooked. To this he pleaded guilty. For this he was confined fourteen months to his farm, glad, no doubt, to escape with so light a penalty. One other trace of him I find in a letter of condolence to Stephen Hosmer, in which he speaks of himself as confined and deprived of the privilege of attending the funeral of a friend. Many curious traditions about Dr. Lee still linger, whose authenticity is not perhaps perfectly clear. One states that he had an apartment in which he kept a fire burn-

ing thirty years, thinking that he was on the eve of discovering the philosopher's stone. Another ascribes to him a violent and unreasonable temper, and tells of a certain valuable lot of ship timber, which he refused to sell, and suffered to rot upon the ground, because he could not obtain his price. Despite his troubles, and despite any faults of temper, he lived to a good old age, dying at eighty years, in 1797, and having reared over his remains a stone which ascribed to him pretty much all of the Christian virtues. Dr. Lee has made a permanent impression upon the history of the town. He has made a permanent impression upon its very soil. For I think that the name Lee's Hill will outlive all its successors. I have no faith that he was one who would have had a tranquil life in any community, or have been popular. I picture him as somewhat selfish, a man of set opinions and not a little resolute and pugnacious in the assertion of them.

It was while Dr. Lee was confined to his farm that one of the most interesting episodes in Concord history took place. I refer to the sojourn of Harvard College. When we consider how, sooner, or later everything seems to appear in this ancient town; that it first sheltered the Provincial Congress; that in 1786 it ran a narrow chance of being itself the State capital; that for the space of a few months it was, six years later, actually that; that in our own day it has been the home of two such opposites as the State prison and the School of Philosophy, it may seem to be in the order of events, that our great institution of learning should sojourn awhile amid its tranquil scenery. At any rate it happened that when, by the siege of Boston, Cambridge became one armed camp, Harvard College

was transported to Concord. The professors and students were scattered through the village, — twelve of the latter finding shelter in the venerable mansion of Dr. Lee. One wonders what sort of an impression this advent made upon the town. Here was a quiet village, quiet then beyond all our capacity in these days of railroads, telegraphs and telephones even to comprehend. Within a mile of the church there could not have been more than seventy-five houses. To this little hamlet came 143 students, with the five, six or ten professors or tutors, with library and apparatus, with increased social life and excitement. 500 students billeted upon the modern town for a year would hardly be an equal burden. It is interesting to see what distinguished men were the result of this somewhat vagrant course of instruction. In the little class of 42, which graduated in 1776, I note the names of Christopher Gore, one of the ablest of the governors of Massachusetts; Samuel Sewall, chief justice of the same State; Royal Tyler, who combined in himself the somewhat incongruous distinctions of chief justice of Vermont and author of the first American drama which ever appeared upon the stage. To these might be added two or three others scarcely less distinguished. I question whether in the long and honorable list of Harvard any class has produced, according to its numbers, more able men than this very class, which spent its senior year in our town. All the students did not escape the fascinations of the place, for Dr. Ripley, for 63 years minister of Concord, Dr. Hurd, for 55 years its physician, and Jonathan Fay, for 33 years its lawyer, were all members of the college in the year of its wandering.

Whether any of the Lee family occupied the homestead between the death of the doctor, in 1797, and the time when the property passed into other hands in 1814, I am not sure. But as Tempe Lee, widow of Silas Lee, did not part with her right of dower until 1814, when William Gray gave her \$1100 for the same, it seems probable that she is the female member of the family of whom a faint memory remains in the minds of those born early in the century. The farm itself seems to have been owned jointly by his sons, Joseph and John. Then John became, by purchase, sole possessor. He conveyed it to his younger brother Silas, from whom it passed finally out of the family. All these sons appear to have been men of more than usual ability. Joseph was ordained minister in Royals-ton in 1768, and preached his last sermon fifty years after his settlement. John was in Castine, Me., as early as 1785, was collector of the port from 1789 till 1801. Afterwards he was largely engaged in the lumber business, apparently to no profit. For in 1810 he conveyed the farm to Silas, as it would seem to protect his brother in the endorsement of a note of ten thousand dollars, which he himself could not pay. Silas was a lawyer in Wiscasset, Me., about 1790, member of Congress in 1800 and 1801, United States attorney for the State of Maine in 1802, and then judge of probate. As we have seen, he became owner of the farm in 1810. But one month later he mortgaged it for \$10,000, no doubt to enable him to pay the note for which he was bound, and at his death, in 1814, the mortgage not having been redeemed, the estate fell into the hands of the mortgagee. Before dismissing this portion of my subject, let me note, as

an interesting case of persistence of the family type, that while Dr. Joseph Lee was a tory in the Revolution, his son John, in the war of 1812, was a federalist to the verge of disloyalty, and his grandson John was in the war of the rebellion in sympathy with the South and opposed to the government.

So William Gray, merchant of Boston, became the owner of Lee's Farm. One of the notable men of his day was this same William Gray, better known by the sobriquet of Billy Gray. Born in Lynn in 1750, he was grandson of one of the three shoemakers of that town who kept journeymen. The boy himself was apprenticed to the same trade, and it is not unlikely that if he had continued in it, with his vast energy, he would have made Lynn before its time the great boot and shoe town. But health failing, he was put first into the employment of a Mr. Gardner and then of Richard Derby, one of the great merchant kings of Salem, in the days of her great prosperity. A story is preserved of his boyhood, something of the George Washington and hatchet variety, in which the Salem lad appears at no disadvantage in comparison with the father of his country, but tells the tale of the breaking of a square of glass with such simple truth, that he receives from his employer as a reward a suit of clothes. Whether this story is veritable or one of the myths which gather around great memories, I know not. But certain it is that his integrity, joined to a mind of wonderful capacity, enabled him to build up a business unparalleled in his time. He owned sixty square-rigged vessels, and his enthusiastic biographer exclaims that there was no country where his name was not known, and no sea not ploughed by his keels.

He was a man of striking qualities. Through a long life he rose between 3 and 4 o'clock, writing all his letters, planning all his enterprises, before half the world was out of bed. As an employer he was just and generous. He never discharged a good servant, and kept many of his captains in his employ more than a quarter of a century. He first discerned the fine quality of Joshua Bates, the American partner of the Barings, and the founder of the Boston Free Library, — taking him from his father's cart, which he was driving, into his counting-room, employing him in confidential business, and so launched him on his great career. One adage, now of pretty wide circulation, may be credited to him. When asked what "enough" was, he replied "a little more." Mr. Gray might never have left Salem, — in which case Lee's Hill might never have known him, — had it not been for the bitter party feeling of the time. In early life he had been a federalist. But when the embargo, in Jefferson's administration, went into effect, he separated from his party, opposing and defeating in town meeting a resolution of censure of government. His motive could not have been a selfish one, for on account of this embargo act he had himself forty vessels rotting at his wharves. But those were days of savage party division. There was no measuring of words. He was called everything that the vocabulary of abuse could furnish. Salem became distasteful to him. He went to Boston, carrying with him his business. There the democratic party took him up and chose him lieutenant governor. During the war of 1812 he lavished his wealth in support of the government. Mr. Drake says that it was his gold that fitted out the Constitution for that memorable cruise

in which she took the Guerriere, and forever dissipated the false ideas of British naval supremacy.* Mr. Gray died in 1825, the richest man in New England. It was in 1816, possibly in 1813 or '14, that he became owner of Lee's Farm. He never, indeed, lived here, but employed a foreman to carry on his place. There was a very heavy growth of old timber. The late Mr. James Wood told me that he worked one winter lumbering for Mr. Gray, that fourteen or fifteen teams were occupied drawing to the river the great pines and oaks, — some of them two and three and even four feet in diameter, — that an enormous raft was made, floated down the river, thence to Boston, there to be used in the building of his wharf, and in the construction of his ships. I suspect that on the whole, farming, without the eye of the employer, did not prove profitable. At any rate, in 1821, he sold the farm for \$3000 less than it cost him; and so closed the connection with the town of one of the most remarkable merchants which Massachusetts ever produced.

We have seen that up to 1825 the farm, of which we have been discoursing, had had in its varied history for owners, an Indian queen, a fur-trader, an inn-keeper, two farmers, two doctors, two merchants, one minister and one lawyer. It was now for a brief season to be the property of a judge. Samuel Phillips Prescott Fay was Concord-born, the son of Jonathan

* An old merchant of Boston, but who spent his boyhood and youth in Concord, used to assert that the very timber of which the Constitution was built, was cut from Lee's Hill, and that his own father teamed it to Charlestown. When we consider what a magnificent growth covered the hill, and that we know that Dr. Lee was in the habit of selling ship-timber, the story looks probable enough, and it certainly adds a new element of interest to the spot.

Fay. He graduated with high honor from Harvard College in 1798. A French war was then threatening, and a small army was gathered at Oxford in this State. Thither he went with the commission of captain. But the war never took place, and he returned to the study of the law which he had just commenced, was admitted to the bar, and early obtained a good professional reputation. In 1821 he was appointed judge of probate, and retained the place until ill health rendered him unequal to its duties, thirty-five years after. He was two years a member of the Governor's Council and twenty-eight years an overseer of Harvard College. As he lived until 1856, he must have been known to many of the elder portion of Concord people. The unbroken testimony is that he was a man of good legal ability, absolute integrity, great urbanity, and much quiet humor. His ownership of the property was nominal, as he purchased it in 1821 and held it till 1825, not for himself, but for his sister's husband, Joseph Barrett. Still no account of the farm and its owners would be complete which omitted him.

Joseph Barrett, familiarly handed down in Concord traditions as Squire Joe Barrett, was a striking figure in the town in the first half of this century. On his father's side he was grandson of Col. James Barrett, who commanded at North Bridge. On his mother's side he was descended from Henry Woodis, one of the early owners of the farm, and Joseph Estabrook, the third minister of the town. Through his paternal grandmother he claimed kindred with Peter Bulkeley. Indeed, it may be said that in every fibre of his body and every drop of his blood he was a Concord product, for I have been unable to find a single ancestor on

either side who was not, either of Concord origin or else a settler of the town. In person he was well nigh of gigantic proportions, standing an inch or two over six feet, and weighing more than 250 pounds. Many feats of strength are told of him, such as lifting barrels of cider and shouldering and carrying up stairs a bag containing eight bushels of corn. His size and weight did not lessen his activity. In the hay field, cradling grain, or holding the plow, especially when he took part in full dress and ruffled shirt at plowing matches, few men could keep pace with him. He was a person of great resolution and courage. For years he was a deputy sheriff, and displayed both his sagacity and fearlessness in the arrest of hard characters, which were by no means few, even in what many esteem to be the golden age of the republic. In 1825 Mr. Barrett became the owner of the Lee farm, though, as we have seen, it was purchased for him and occupied by him as early as 1821. How successful an agriculturist he was I know not, but he must have been a notable one. Everything he did was on a large scale. His nephew, George M. Barrett, told me that he used to keep a flock of eight hundred sheep. To these he gave endless attention, himself caring for them in health and sickness, so that they knew him and followed him. At one time he engaged in the manufacture of cider, often having on hand more than 500 barrels. Cutting and teaming of wood and lumber grew in his hands to large proportions. A story, which has been preserved, shows how great a business in this line he must have done. A man asked the squire if he would be one of several to loan him a yoke of oxen, as he had a great load to move. "How many do you want in all?"

was the reply. "Ten yoke." "If that is all," said the squire, "you need not go round to the neighbors to gather such a little team, I will furnish the whole." The fact is that Mr. Barrett had in his barn at that very time twelve yoke of oxen and six or eight horses. It is not so wonderful that, in these days of horned scarcity, his son likes to have a good pair of cattle. As we have intimated, the squire was a mighty man in the hay field, taking the lead, and permitting no man to pass him. His confidence in his vigor and activity led him into a sort of dilatoriness, by which lateness to church, and especially to the stage-coach, was a rule of his life, and which in a person of his genial ways only added a touch of humor to people's conception of him. In 1844 he gave the charge of the farm up to his son Richard, working afterwards as suited his fancy. He was driving a load of stone when the news came to him that he was elected Treasurer and Receiver General of the State. He jocosely said he could not possibly accept it, for he was engaged to work for Dick at \$10 a month. However, he must have made a compromise with his employer, as he took and filled the office until his death in 1848. It would be presumptuous for me to attempt any characterization of one known to so many by personal acquaintance. But this, I think, may be said: No one would be likely to attempt to depict the social and business life of Concord between 1800 and 1850, and omit from his picture the stalwart form and marked mental physiognomy of the twelfth owner of Lee's farm, Squire Joe Barrett.

Of the later owners of Lee's farm it does not seem needful to speak at any great length. From 1844 to 1852 it belonged to the son of the squire, our townsman,

Captain Richard Barrett, and was carried on by him. He sold it in 1852, and has for many years filled the position of Treasurer of the Middlesex Mutual Fire Insurance Co. Samuel G. Wheeler, the purchaser, was a native of the State of New York, who in a long, and active life had been by turns a manufacturer, a commission merchant and a dealer in real estate. While he occupied the place he thoroughly renovated the old mansion, built the great barn, laid the stone walls, planted on the Acton Road rows of elms, and so in many ways added to the value and increased the comeliness of the estate.

Four years passed, and the property had a new owner. It would have seemed as if every variety of life and occupation had already come into contact with the ancient farm. But not so. The new owner, Capt. David Elwell, was a retired sea captain, who in three score and odd years had plowed more water than land. He was a remarkably intelligent, active and successful shipmaster, making long voyages, chiefly to the East Indies and Sumatra. It is remembered of him that he was the first American captain who ever sailed through the Straits of Magellan. In 1840 he retired from the sea, was for years wharfinger of Union wharf, and later Treasurer of the East Boston Dry Dock Co. At the advanced age of sixty-eight years he came to Concord. He filled the house with a great collection of curiosities, gathered from many lands, and settled down in his new home. But in the winter of 1856 and '57 his house with all its contents was burned and he moved back to East Boston. Nothing remained but the cellar and the great chimney. On this last there was, when I came to town, a half-effaced inscrip-

tion variously deciphered 1646 or 1656. It was no doubt the date of the erection of the building. A single Concord anecdote of Capt. Elwell has been preserved, and indicates that he was a man who had his own ideas of men and things and did not hesitate to express them. After the fire he stopped awhile at the Middlesex Hotel. Capt. Isaac I. Hayes, of Arctic celebrity, came to Concord, probably to lecture. Rightfully or wrongfully, the impression then was that he had in an unjustifiable manner deserted his superior officer, Capt. Kane. Some one offered to introduce Capt. Elwell to Mr. Hayes. "No," was the emphatic answer, "not to a man who deserted his commander." The boy of ten or twelve, who heard the reply, never forgot the kind of wrathful indignation with which it was spoken.

Two more changes and the history of the farm is completed. It passed successively into the hands of two grandsons of old Dr. Isaac Hurd, who, in the last year of his college life, spent as it was in Concord, might well have frequented its goodly acres, and possibly lived in its venerable homestead. Again fresh vocations furnished fresh owners. Joseph L. Hurd was a commission grain merchant, having his headquarters at Joliet, Illinois, a State which only as far back as the time when William Gray owned Lee's farm, must have been a wellnigh untrodden prairie. For in 1810 Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota together had only about twelve thousand inhabitants, or one person to every sixteen square miles. Charles Henry Hurd, the present owner, came to the farm from an employment which would have filled our ancestors with astonishment, if not with affright. He had been

a railroad man, a vocation which came into existence not half a century ago, and which in that brief time has wrought marvellous changes and accelerated material progress.

Nearly a quarter of a millenium has slipped away since the white man took possession of these acres. The old mansion, the old barn, all the old things of man's device are gone. A modern house and barn of grand proportions have now replaced them. Perhaps the farm looks forward to another 250 years of yet more varied history, to be rehearsed by some future chronicler to an audience yet to be. Who knows?

This is an ancient story, and I think it not amiss to add to the chronicle what our Puritan ministers used to call an improvement. Rightly viewed this farm has been in itself a little world. All trades, all professions, all human interests, seem sooner or later to have come to it. The Indian, the fur-trader and planter of new towns, the Cromwellian soldier and inn-keeper, merchants, doctors, lawyers, mechanics, farmers, a judge, a minister, a sailor, a railroad manager — all these have possessed the land, and for the most part have departed and left little trace of themselves behind. I count that nine different stocks or families have in 250 years owned the farm, and that only two of them are represented in the town today, unless it be by remote side branches. But on the soil there are nothing but surface changes. The beautifully rounded little hill, the green meadow, the winding rivers, these are just what they were two hundred years ago.

Instinctively as I close, I recall Emerson's words, which seem simply concentrated history :

“ Each of these landlords walked amidst his farm,
Saying, ‘Tis mine, my children’s and my name’s;
How sweet the west wind sounds in my own trees!
How graceful climb those shadows on my hill!
I fancy these pure waters and the flags
Know me, as does my dog; we sympathize;
And, I affirm, my actions smack of the soil.’ ”

“ Where are these men? Asleep beneath their grounds;
And strangers, fond as they, their furrows plough.

The lawyer’s deed
Ran sure,
In tail,
To them and to their heirs
Who shall succeed,
Without fail,
Forevermore.

Here is the land,
Shaggy with wood,
With the old valley,
Mound and flood.
But the heritors?
Fled like the flood’s foam, —
The lawyer and the laws,
And the kingdom,
Clean swept herefrom.

They called me theirs,
Who so controlled me;
Yet every one
Wished to stay, and is gone.
How am I theirs,
If they cannot hold me,
But I hold them?”

PC 1.2





DOEBS BROS.
LIBRARY BINDING

JUL -69
ST. AUGUSTINE

FLA.
32084

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 014 569 5

